

Interface links mismatched PCs

We are now in an era of mismatched computers. Older PCs sport the old standard 5¼ inch floppy drives, while newer ones often come equipped with the smaller and faster 3½ inch drives.

So how do you exchange data between computers with different floppy formats? One solution is a new product called File Shuttle.

Unlike most other file transfer programs, however, you don't need a special cable with File Shuttle to hook up your computers. Instead, this program comes with a little hardware gizmo — called the "Rocket Socket" — that lets you press your regular printer cable into file transferring duty. This is a plus for laptop computer users who want to cut down on the paraphernalia they have to carry with them.

I was anxious to compare File Shuttle with Traveling Software's Laplink, which I previously thought was the best program of its kind available.

I was impressed with the new program. Some of File Shuttle's features are:



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■ **H i g h** speed. Personal computers can communicate with other PCs by using either "serial" or "parallel" ports. File Shuttle can work with either.

When it uses the parallel port, however, its transfer speed is noticeably faster than Laplink's, which relies on serial connections. At the top end of performance, File Shuttle can move files between a couple of 80386s at the rate of 3 megabytes a minute.

■ **E a s y** file selection. You can specify files singly or mark them as groups. A quick sorting feature lets you first view files by name, extension, date or size. Or you can view your entire hard disk directory graphically as a "tree" and simply highlight complete subdirectories for sending. When the tree structure is displayed, a single key

stroke lets you mark all the directories so you can send a complete mirror-image of one computer's hard disk to another.

■ **A u t o m a t i c** procedures. Macros let you record the keystrokes used in any given file transfer session. Then any time you want to send the same files again, you just "replay" the macro. If you have any problems with a macro, a trace command allows you to view macro execution in slow motion.

For more advanced users, you can run File Shuttle from the DOS command line. In real automation, those commands can be assembled in a DOS batch file for unattended running.

■ **M u l t i p l e** language interfaces. This is the first product I've seen that comes with built-in interfaces in English, French, and German — handy for European travelers.

When you're sending files you have a number of options in addition to selecting file and directory names. You can specify date ranges, keep files with duplicate names from being sent, and specify whether files should be stored

under the same directory names on the receiving computer. Once you have the File Shuttle software installed and cables connected, you can run the program from either computer.

On the downside, this program is strictly for copying files from one computer to another. Unlike the new version of Laplink, you won't be able to simulate certain aspects of a network such as accessing remote devices like printers.

■ **T h e B o t t o m L i n e:** File Shuttle improves on Laplink's shortcomings and also offers an easier-to-use menu. Because of its innovative Rocket Socket, users can get away with a minimum of extra hardware when you hit the road. I, highly recommend it.

File Shuttle, priced at \$119.95, is published by GetC Software Inc., Box 8110-182, 264 H St., Blaine, Wash. 98230; (800) 663-8066.

Hillel Segal's weekly column evaluates gadgets, small-computer hardware and software, seminars, and books designed to enhance business productivity.